

Lehigh Valley International Airport Transportation Exercise
Sponsored by Lehigh Valley International Airport, Pennsylvania Emergency
Management Agency, Federal Express, and Lehigh County
With Support from the
U.S. Department of Energy Transportation Emergency Preparedness Program
Exercise date September 24, 2005

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Approximately six months ago, the Lehigh Valley International Airport (LVIA) partnered with the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, Federal Express (FedEx), Lehigh County, and the Department of Energy Transportation Emergency Preparedness Program (TEPP) to conduct a full field response exercise involving a radioactive material shipment. The six month planning period included several training sessions for both first responders and hospital emergency room staff, and a tabletop exercise to discuss responder expectations. Approximately 50 responders participated in the Modular Emergency Response Radiological Transportation Training, 24 hospital and EMS care providers participated in the G346 Radiological Training for Hospital sessions, and 42 responders participated in the tabletop exercise. Approximately 100 emergency responders from Lehigh and Northampton Counties participated in the September 24, 2005 exercise. The exercise was staged at the Federal Express Terminal, located at the Lehigh Valley International Airport. The incident involved a fire, radioactive materials, and a total of three casualties. A fire occurred on a conveyer unit that is used during the aircraft unloading process. The fire spread from the conveyer unit to eight radioactive material packages that had been placed on the conveyer during the unloading. Several employees were injured while trying to evacuate or extinguish the fire. Emergency responders arrived and extinguished the fire. They rescued the victims and worked with the radiation authority to determine the extent of the radioactive material release and needed cleanup activities. To assist in size up, fire fighting, hazardous materials response and recovery operations, LVIA responders requested assistance from Lehigh and Northampton counties, and the Pennsylvania Bureau of Radiation Protection. County and state response included fire, emergency medical service, and hazardous materials teams that assisted with sizeup and mitigation of the incident. During the early exercise planning process, each agency identified and agreed that the scenario and exercise evaluation would be based on Department of Homeland Security requirements and format. Exercise planners found the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) planning series difficult to use. The effort required to review the extensive information and manuals did not prove to be efficient or user friendly. Using HSEEP as guidance, the exercise planning committee took numerous hours to filter through these documents to identify the needed scenario format, planning guidance and evaluation criteria. The participating agencies reviewed the selected scenario format, planning approach and objectives they felt met Department of Homeland Security guidance for all the participating agencies. Eleven objectives were selected from the TEPP Planning Tools which are modeled after the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Program Manual on Hazardous Materials Exercise Evaluation Methodology (HM-EEM). In the opinion of the evaluators, all 11 objectives were met or partially met. The Exercise/Evaluation Team identified several noteworthy practices that the various agencies can continue to build upon. Also, evaluators identified several improvement areas for each agency.